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AUTHOR Salazar, Abran J.
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ABSTRACT

This paper integrates the findings of past research which has focused on the individual acquisition of organizational commitment and the effects of that acquisition. The paper first reviews the literature on the three related constructs of commitment, identification, and socialization, providing a critique of the literature that has investigated these concepts. The paper next presents a theoretical orientation that serves as a guiding framework for integrating the findings of past research regarding the processes and effects of individual acquisition of organizational values and goals. The paper explicates how that framework may help further knowledge with respect to William Whyte's best-selling book "The Organization Man," published in 1956. The last section of the paper outlines a series of studies (consisting of six phases) that will allow acquisition of that knowledge from a communication perspective. A figure illustrating the level of intrinsicness associated with processes of social influence and a figure illustrating the processes through which the various components of commitment are acquired are included. Contains 29 references. (RS)

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ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT, SOCIALIZATION, AND IDENTIFICATION: A NEW APPROACH AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

ED 360 659

Abran J. Salazar
Department of Speech Communication
and Theatre Arts
Texas A&M University
608N Blocker Bldg.
College Station, Texas 77843-4234

Telephone: 409-845-5500

CS 508243

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ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT, SOCIALIZATION, AND IDENTIFICATION: A NEW APPROACH AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Abstract

An examination of the available literature on organizational commitment finds similarities between commitment, identification, and socialization. Four problems concerning commitment research are identified and remedied by proposing a theoretical perspective grounded in Kelman's (1958) processes of social influence. Future directions for commitment research, employing the perspective are provided.

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT, SOCIALIZATION, AND IDENTIFICATION: A NEW APPROACH AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In 1956 William Whyte published The Organization Man. The book became an instant best seller. It specified the dangers of being over-committed to an organization. The earnest call to arms against zealous affection for one's organization was made rather clear by Whyte and emphasized by Kerr:

> I would urge each individual to avoid total involvement in any organization; to seek to whatever extent lies within his power to limit each group to the minimum control necessary for performance of essential functions; to struggle against the effort to absorb; to lend his efforts to many organizations and give himself completely to none; to teach children, in the home and in the school, "to be laws unto themselves and to depend on themselves," as Walt Whitman urged us many years ago--for that is the well source of the independent spirit (cited in Whyte, 1956, p. 51).

In the world of that bygone era, the Organizational Man did indeed exist. He was a man who "believed in the group as the source of creativity and in belongingness as the ultimate need of the individual" (Randall, 1987, p.460). He was a conformist whose loyalty to organizational goals and values was perhaps exceeded only by his service to it.

But how fares the organization man today? Thackray contends that the organization man is a vanishing breed. That contention is supported with the following statistics: In 1978 an American chief executive had an average of 1.5 employers; by 1981 that average had increased to 2.1. Fifty-three percent of male executives state that they would give up their present occupation and transfer to another company if it offered attractive features other than increased salary. And, according to a study conducted by AT&T, incoming executives are only half as differential to authority as were their predecessors 20 years earlier (Thackray, 1981).

These findings are indicative of a public attitude embracing Kerr's advice. They are indicative of an attitude reflecting a reverence of the individual and the decline of commitment to the collective

(organization); an attitude which signals the fall of the organization man and perhaps of institutions in general (Thackray, 1981).

But what exactly is this binding to the organization that Whyte, as well as others, has called organizational commitment? It turns out that the question is much more difficult to answer than one would imagine. In the world of social scientific research, the term "commitment" has acquired a variety of meanings that makes generalization of the findings of studies which have investigated the construct, difficult. In addition, there appears to be a great deal of concept redundancy (Morrow, 1983) and confusion with other constructs such as organizational identification and socialization.

It will be the purpose of this investigation to integrate the findings of past research which has focused on the individual acquisition of organizational commitment, and the effects of that acquisition. In doing so, I will fist review the literature on the three related constructs of commitment, identification, and socialization, providing a critique of the literature that has investigated these concepts. Then I will present a theoretical orientation that will serve as a guiding framework for integrating the findings of past research regarding the processes and effects of individual acquisition of organizational values and goals. In this same section, I will explicate how that framework may help us further our knowledge with respect to Whyte's organization man. Finally, I will outline a series of studies which will allow us, from a communication perspective, to obtain that knowledge.

A Review of the Literature

Towards establishing definitions

Commitment. There have been many definitions put forth in coming to terms with organizational commitment. Porter saw commitment as a function of three inter-related components: The willingness of an individual to exert effort on behalf of the organization; the desire to continue working for the organization; and acceptance of the organization's goals and values. Kantor (1968) viewed commitment as positive affect on the part of the individual for the

organization, as well as the intention to work toward the attainment of organizational goals. Steers (1977) defined organizational commitment as an individual's identification with, and involvement in, a particular organization.

Though the definitions of organizational commitment seem to vary with the scholar investigating the term, most would agree with Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian's (1974) assessment of the term's components. Organizational commitment consists of (1) a belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values (the individual's degree of value and goal congruence with the organization); (2) a willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization; and (3) a strong desire to remain in the organization, that is, to maintain membership (Bateman & Strasser, 1984; Luthans, McCaul, & Dodd, 1985; Katz & Kahn, 1978).

Identification. There have also been a variety of meanings attached to organizational identification as well. But though the definitions may differ in wording, they do not differ in content to any great degree. Rotondi (1975), for example, defined identification as "the process by which an individual identifies with the organization with which he[/she] is employed" (p. 95). Lee (1975) defined the concept as a sense of belongingness to the organization which results from "common goals shared with others in the organization, and loyalty which results from attitudes and behaviors which support the organization".

Though, as with commitment, the definitions attached to identification vary, we may extract from them a common theme; namely, the acquisition and sharing of organizational goals and values by organizational members. In the most famous study on identification Hall, Schneider, and Nygren (1970) investigated the congruence of organizational and individual goals in the U.S. Forest Service. It is a classic exemplar of research on organizational identification.

Note, however, that identification is not entirely exclusive of the commitment concept. Identification is, rather, to be seen as a chief component of commitment (Katz & Kahn, 1978), commitment being the more global concept, and identification being the first component of the definition of commitment settled upon by Porter et al. (1974).

Socialization. Jablin, in a series of essays (Jablin, 1982; Jablin, 1984; Jablin, 1987; Jablin & Krone, 1987; Jablin & McComb, 1984) outlines a research program taking a communication perspective of organizational socialization. The emphasis throughout these essays has been on the assimilation of new members into the organization.

Jablin (1987) claims that the process of assimilation in the organization is composed of two dimensions: "(1) deliberate and unintentional efforts by the organization to socialize employees, and (2) workers' attempts to individualize and modify their roles and organizational environments to better satisfy their needs, ideas, and values" (p. 693). It is the socialization aspect of assimilation (Jablin's first dimension) that will be the concern of this section.

Integrating various literatures on assimilation, Jablin (1987) outlines three stages in which assimilation processes occur. The first is the anticipatory socialization phase in which the individual is constantly gathering occupational information from the environment as he/she develops. Prior employment experiences help in providing that information. During the encounter stage, the newcomer is "broken in". He/she "confronts the reality of his or her organizational role." The third stage, metamorphosis, consists of the newcomer "acquiring organizationally appropriate attitudes and behaviors, [resolving] intra- and extra-organizational role conflicts, and [commencing] efforts to individualize his/her organizational role" (Jablin, 1987, p. 694). Note that this stage is similar to the identification concept and the first component of commitment outlined by Porter et al..

The Nature of The Problem.

When Whyte wrote his book dealing with the detriments associated with over-commitment to an organization, he probably had no idea of the research gaps and problems the concept would later raise in social scientific organizational research. Those gaps and problems have typically been of four sorts: First, there are definitional problems encountered by anyone trying to make sense of the organizational commitment literature; second, scholars often fail to distinguish commitment as it may be manifested across different types of organizations; third, scholars have also, although to a lesser extent, failed to distinguish commitment manifested within the organization, or as a product

of, organizational substructures (subsystems); finally, scholars have found it difficult to synthesize and generalize findings because they have not distinguished between individual and organizational disadvantages (or benefits) of over (or under) commitment. Each of these problems will be examined below.

Definitional problems. As has been discussed previously, commitment has been viewed as being composed of three elements: Acceptance of the organization's goals and values, a willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization, and a strong desire to stay within the organization. While some researchers have incorporated all three elements in their investigations (e.g., Porter et al., 1974; Bateman & Strasser, 1984), there are a number of scholars that have not. Instead these researchers have opted to focus on one aspect or element of the definition (e.g., Sheldon, 1971; Hrebiniak & Allutto, 1973). The findings of such research are reported (as citations in other research reports) as representative of the commitment construct, when in fact that is not the case.

Also, commitment is often operationalized in much the same way that identification is defined, as when Steers (1977) defined commitment as the relative strength of an individual's identification and involvement with an organization. At times, identification has also been operationalized in much the same way in which commitment has been defined (Lee, 1971). The result has been a redundancy of research findings classified under different rubrics.

Differences across organizations. Far too often research findings are generalized across organizations without regard to the type (or types) of organization that was sampled. Failing to distinguish between types of organizations in commitment studies precludes the findings of between-organization differences in terms of benefits or detriments. That is, including different types of organizations in a sample and aggregating data obtained from that sample prohibits the finding of differences between dissimilar organizations. For some types of organizations commitment may be beneficial, and for others it may be detrimental.

Rotondi (1975) provides us with an example, in the identification literature, that examined this problem specifically. He found an inverse relationship between organizational identification and

effectiveness levels of engineers, but found no relationship between the same variables among scientists.

Differences within organizations. In contrast to the majority of commitment studies which have examined organizational commitment effects on the individual, there are relatively few studies (those examining decision-making) that have concentrated on examining the effects and processes involved in sub-organizational commitment. In making the case for the examination of such processes and effects, Reichers (1985) contends that the organization, for many individuals, is nothing but an abstraction, "an abstraction that is represented in reality by co-workers, superiors, subordinates, customers, and other groups and individuals that collectively comprise the organization" (p. 472).

It is with these various groups and individuals that an employee of the "organization identifies with, and perhaps eventually comes to identify with the "organization" through a process of transference (Rotondi, 1975); that is, organizational goals and values are transferred by these individuals and groups to the focal individual. The ways in which those goals and values are transferred remains a void in organizational research (Jablin, 1987; but see Cheney, 1983a, 1983b).

Individual and organizational gains and losses. Another aspect that remains largely unexplored in organizational commitment research involves examining the effects of differing levels of commitment, both on the individual and on the organization (Randall, 1989). As a corollary, absent from the literature is an examination of the processes by which people become low, moderately, or highly committed to the organization. Is this a difference of socializing agents (subsystems of the organization), types of organizations, individual differences, or a combination of the three? It is these questions, as well as the definitional problems and gaps in the literature that this paper attempts to answer.

In the following section I will provide a theoretical perspective that I believe will give future scholars of organizational commitment a more firm foothold on what exactly commitment is (and is not). At the same time, the framework will allow for integration of related concepts such as

identification and the metamorphosis stage of assimilation. This framework will also prove to be adaptable to communication based inquiry. The theoretical perspective is Kelman's (1958) processes of social influence and is based on conceiving of commitment as a multi-stage process which builds on identification and metamorphosis processes.

The Processes of Social Influence

The vast amount of literature treating the subject of persuasion has focused on attitude change, to the neglect of attitude formation. One theory that has attempted to remedy this situation is Kelman's (1958) processes of social influences, which posits that influence takes place through one, or a combination of, three processes: Compliance, identification, and internalization.

Kelman makes several assumptions about attitude formation and attitude change (influence). First, that knowing the method in which an attitude was acquired is the key to changing it. Second, the same attitude may have developed in two different persons by two or more different processes; subsequently, the procedures or strategies one would use in changing it would not be the same. Given these assumptions, I will now proceed in reviewing the key elements of the theory, concluding with its application to the study of organizational attitude and value formation in the individual. Because the theory has been discussed at length elsewhere (Kelman, 1958), only the elements deemed essential to the purpose at hand will be reviewed here.

Compliance

Attitudes can be acquired by the process Kelman termed compliance. Compliance occurs when an individual accepts influence from another in the hopes of gaining a reward or avoiding a punishment from that other. That "other" may be a person or a group or a greater collectivity such as an organization. Note that because influence is accepted, it may also be rejected, though the decision to accept or reject will be made on the basis of the individual's weighing of the rewards and benefits accruing with the acceptance of influence.

It is also important to note that the individual will adopt a behavior or attitude because of the weighing of rewards and punishments associated with the adoption of that behavior or attitude. That is, people do what they do, or believe what they believe because of compliance; because

holding the attitude or performing the behavior obtains them certain rewards, and/or helps them avoid certain punishments. The attitude or behavior is not something that is intrinsic to the individual.

The locus of power (a term which will go undefined for the present) resides in the entity with means control. That is, the person, group, or organization that is deemed to have control over the administration of the rewards and punishments is the entity with power. Compliance also requires surveillance by the influencing agent. That is, the influencing agent has to be present, in body or in spirit, in guiding the individual's actions. Further, a change in the attitude, or the formation of a new one, occurs when the perceptions of the conditions for social rewards change. That is, the attitude changes or is replaced when the individual (the target of the influence) perceives a shift in the rewards/punishments for a particular situation.

The following example should illustrate the process of compliance. We are perhaps all aware of what I have chosen to call the Eddie Haskel phenomenon. Just as Eddie was about to hit the Beaver for saying something about Eddie's less than desirable personality, June or Ward Cleaver would walk into the room. Eddie would immediately change his demeanor and even straighten out the Beav's collar just before politely complimenting Mrs. Cleaver on her new dress. As soon as she left the room, however, the Beav would be the recipient of a knuckle to the shoulder. In this scenario, Mrs. Cleaver is the influencing agent with control over rewards and punishments. Eddie has complied with the behavior expected of him from Mrs. Cleaver (not hitting Beaver), although that behavior is not intrinsic to Eddie. He still hit the Beaver after Mrs. Cleaver left the room. A change in behavior exhibited by Eddie (for example, hitting the Beaver in the presence of Mrs. Cleaver) would have occurred if Eddie no longer perceived Mrs. Cleaver as possessing the means with which to punish (or reward) Eddie.

Identification

Another process through which attitudes may be acquired is identification. Kelman tells us that an attitude is formed through identification when an individual (target) adopts an attitude that another individual (influencing agent) is seen as having adopted, because the individual (target)

wants a satisfying, self-defining relationship with that other (influencing agent). An individual accepts influence because he/she wants to initiate a satisfying, self-defining relationship with another person or group. That is, a person adopts the induced behavior or attitude because it is associated with the desired relationship. We like a person, or want to belong to a certain group or organization, so we adopt the attitudes or behaviors they hold or perform.

Kelman argues that attitudes acquired through the identification process are actually held by the individual (as contrasted to those acquired through compliance), but they are not fully integrated; they are still tied to an external source (the influencing agent). The attitude is not necessarily adopted because the individual actually believes it, but because it is tied to that other person or group.

The locus of power in the process of identification resides in the attractiveness of the influencing agent (individual, group, organization). That is, we like the entity. Identification also requires salience of the relationship. That is, the individual (target) defines a relationship as salient; the relationship is meaningful to the individual, physically or psychologically. A change in attitude or the formation of a new one occurs when the conditions for the self-defining relationships change. When the relationship ceases to be satisfying, the relationship changes, as does the attitude. Also, when the relationship is no longer important in 'defining who you are,' the relationship changes.

An example of attitudes and behaviors obtained through identification is best illustrated by the adolescent boy who buys Wheaties cereal because he observes Michael Jordan's picture is on the box. The boy desires a relationship with Michael Jordan and establishes one by adopting Jordan's behavior (eating Wheaties) and attitudes (I like Wheaties). As the boy ages, Jordan becomes less important to the boy; the relationship becomes less satisfying. A new relationship is now desired with, for example, his work group, and new behaviors and attitudes are formed in the process.

Internalization

A third process through which attitudes and behaviors are formed is internalization. According to Kelman, internalized attitudes and behaviors are central to who we are. They fit what we

believe. The process of internalization is said to occur when an individual accepts attitudes and behaviors because they are intrinsically rewarding. The individual adopts an induced behavior or attitude because it is congruent with his or her value system. Satisfaction is derived from the content of the induced behavior or attitude.

The locus of power in the internalization process resides in the credibility of the influencing agent. That is, the degree to which the influencing agent is deemed to be competent (expert) and trustworthy. The process also requires relevance of the attitude or behavior. That is, the individual (target) perceives the attitude or behavior as being connected to central values; they are relevant to the individual (target) in some way. Finally, a change in attitude or behavior occurs when the conditions for the maximization of values change. That is, the internalized attitudes and behaviors change when they are no longer perceived to maximally express the individual's central values.

The following example serves to illustrate the internalization process. If an individual values life and deplores murder, and finds that Bill Clinton is giving a speech that opposes capital punishment (which, for the sake of this illustration is a form of murder), the individual forms a favorable attitude toward Bill Clinton if the individual feels him to be a credible agent. If, however, the individual hears, from someone whom the individual perceives to be a credible source, that Bill Clinton has committed murder, the attitude (Bill Clinton is a good person) no longer maximally expresses the central value (life is good, murder is bad). The attitude toward Clinton is now unfavorable (Clinton is a bad person).

Commitment, identification, and socialization: Towards integration

As has been previously noted, commitment may be conceived as being composed of three elements: Acceptance of the organization's goals and values; a willingness on the part of the individual to exert effort on behalf of the organization; and a sense of belongingness, or a desire to stay within the organization (Porter, et al.). Indeed, this definition has been operationalized by the majority of researchers investigating commitment and can be said to be the "definition of choice"

(see Hartman & Johnson, 1989). While there have been various discussions about definitions of commitment (e.g., Reichers, 1985), to say that commitment is at least this much is acceptable (if not mandatory).

As has also been noted, there have been various other literatures which have indirectly addressed issues of organizational commitment. In the socialization literature, Jablin has identified three processes in the assimilation of new members to the organization. The third of these processes, metamorphosis, is of interest here because of its conceptual parallel in commitment research. So it is with investigations that have made identification (as product and process) in the organization their focus.

Each of these elements (identification and metamorphosis) are conceptual mirror images of each other, and also of the first element of commitment. In integrating these concepts, then, an emphasis is placed on commitment, acknowledging that it is composed of three elements. The other two concepts (identification and metamorphosis) may then be merged and unified with the first element of commitment. I will therefore not hesitate to draw on findings of the other literatures (identification and metamorphosis) to (1) fill in gaps that the commitment literature has left behind when dealing with the first element of commitment (member acceptance of organizational goals and values) and, (2) outline a research perspective that I believe will help address the issues raised earlier in this paper.

Organizational Commitment: Answering Unresolved Questions

The position advanced in this paper is that the literature on commitment has raised far more questions than it has answered. As a result, we are still in the dark as to how it is that organizational members come to be committed to the organization, and when (over-, under-) commitment becomes detrimental, or advantageous, to the individual, the organization, or a subsystem of the organization. It is these areas which will be examined in outlining and implementing a program of research which acknowledges the role of communication in building and maintaining organizational commitment.

A framework for the study of commitment.

I believe Kelman's processes of social influence can offer us a useful starting point for integrating previous research on commitment, and have heuristic potential for scholars wishing to commence or continue such work. In this section, I will establish a framework for studying commitment as product and the process(es) by which a person becomes committed to the organization.

Initially, then, one may conceive of commitment as being acquired in the organization through one of the processes of social influence outlined by Kelman. However, it is important to note that identification as product (as a means of inducing attitude change or acquisition) in Kelman's delineation, is different from the identification process several other authors (e.g., Cheney, 1983a, 1983b; Tompkins & Cheney, 1985) have focused on in an organizational setting. Therefore, distinguishing between identification as process, and identification as product, is useful. That is to say, an individual may adopt a desired (on the part of the organization) attitude or behavior because he/she identifies with the organization. Conversely, an individual may be induced to identify with the organization through the use of various influence strategies. The importance of this distinction will take on relevance as I explicate the implications of the framework I will outline shortly.

From Kelman's perspective, organizational commitment may be thought of as a product of attitude or behavior acquisition and/or change induced through one or a combination of three processes: Compliance, identification, and internalization. Examining these processes, one may place them on a continuum of intrinsicness; that is, the extent to which an attitude or behavior, induced by the process in question, is actually a "part" of the individual. Those attitudes or behaviors that are acquired through compliance are at the lower end of the intrinsicness continuum, while those acquired through the process of internalization are at the higher end. Those acquired through identification may be placed in the middle (See figure 1).

Insert Figure one about here

Intuitively, such an ordering of the processes of social influence is appealing because it permits an examination of the strength of one's commitment to the organization. Take, for example, the acquisition of commitment through a process of compliance. An individual may perform an induced behavior required by the organization because of compliance; that is, the individual performs the behavior requested of him/her because of the rewards and punishments associated with that behavior. The behavior is performed because the individual seeks to avoid certain punishments (being fired) and gain certain rewards (job security, increase in pay). Note that the behavior is not intrinsic to the individual, but rather, external to him/her. It is not something the individual would ordinarily do. The behavior is easily changed, depending on the individual's view of the conditions for rewards/punishments, and/or perceived surveillance by the influencing agent.

If we were to examine the three elements of commitment, and were to determine they were acquired by a process of compliance, we would reasonably conclude that the individual is not intrinsically committed to the organization. That is, the individual may perform behaviors consistent with the goals of the organization, may exert substantial effort, and may have a strong desire to stay with the organization, but because the elements were acquired through beliefs about the organization's ability to provide certain rewards, they are not internal to the individual. The strength of commitment should be low.

At the other end of the spectrum, commitment may be acquired through the process of internalization. As with compliance, an individual may perform behaviors consistent with organizational goals, exert effort on behalf of the organization, and have a desire to stay within the organization. But because these attitudes and behaviors are intrinsic to the individual, s/he is more strongly committed to the organization.

Organizational commitment may also occur through a combination of any of these processes. For example, an individual may exert effort on behalf of the organization because of compliance, agree with organizational goals because of identification, and have a strong desire to stay also because of identification. Specifically, these combinations may be represented graphically with a

3X3 matrix (See figure 2). The columns represent the elements of commitment, and the rows represent the processes of influence arranged in corresponding levels of intrinsicness. The intersection of one of the elements with one of the processes would indicate how that element was acquired/induced and the corresponding strength with which it is held.

Such an approach takes a decidedly communication orientation. Because the focus is on the processes through which commitment is induced/acquired, it is a model especially suitable to communication researchers.

Insert Figure two about here

This then will be the framework that will guide the discussion that follows. Organizational commitment will be viewed as a product induced/acquired through the processes of social influence.

Implications for Future Research

The study of organizational commitment ought to proceed in phases, with each phase building on the findings of the previous one(s). Proceeding in phases provides the best way to avoid the gaps and inconsistencies that have plagued past research.

Commitment: Product Through Process.

Phase 1: Operationalization of the processes of social influence.

In addition to reviews of the literature that has made use of Kelman's processes, initial attempts at operationalization should include the construction of a questionnaires and unobtrusive observations designed to tap the various social influence strategies (tactics) that occur within the organization.

Specifically, types of behaviors/communication particular to each process of influence should be investigated. Among some of the research questions that this first phase should be concerned with are:

What types of behaviors/communication are indicative of compliance processes?

What types of behaviors/communication are indicative of identification processes?

What types of behaviors/communication are indicative of internalization processes?

Phase 2: Examining 'Intrinsicness'.

While research in phase one would take a straightforward behavioral approach toward identifying specific types of strategies that serve as indicators of the underlying processes, caution must be exercised in claiming that a particular type of observable behavior/communication (across all three elements of commitment) from an influencing agent is adequately reflecting the strength with which commitment for the organization is held by the individual (the person being influenced). Kelman would, of course, support this view. However, to make generalizations of this kind, additional behavioral and attitudinal measures are needed. That is, in order to say that if an individual was induced to acquire some level of commitment through a single process, it is not adequate to say that the process is indeed indicative of the strength (level) of commitment. In short, measures of strength of commitment need to be examined in light of the processes through which that commitment was induced/acquired.

Research in this phase should explore the effects that different processes have on the 'intrinsicness' (strength) with which organizational commitment is held. At least three hypotheses may be advanced for test:

1. Individuals whose inducements to adopt organizational goals, exert effort on the part of the organization, and to have a desire to remain within the organization, are accomplished primarily through compliance processes will be relatively less committed to the organization.

2. Individuals whose inducements to adopt organizational goals, exert effort on the part of the organization, and to have a desire to remain within the organization, are accomplished primarily through identification processes will be relatively moderately committed to the organization.

> 3. Individuals whose inducements to adopt organizational goals, exert effort on the part of the organization, and to have a desire to remain within the organization, are accomplished primarily through internalization processes will be relatively highly committed to the organization.

Phase 3: Processes and organizations.

Mintzberg (1983) in his book, Power In and Around Organizations, categorizes organizations on the basis of their configurations of power. The configurations are different from one another in terms of the distribution of power within and out of the organization. He explains six basic types of power configurations: The instrument, closed system, autocracy, missionary, meritocracy, and the political arena.

From the point of view of communication scholars studying organizational commitment, Mintzberg's typology is a useful one. Incorporating the framework described earlier in conjunction with the typology, research questions that may be asked are:

> 1.) What types of social influence strategies are used more often by what type of power configuration(s)?
>
> 2.) Why are certain social influence strategies relied upon more than others in certain configurations?

On the basis of Mintzberg's (1983) discussion of the six power configurations, several hypotheses make themselves particularly amenable to test. The distribution of power within the autocracy, for example, is such that it is concentrated in the internal coalition (specifically, within the CEO), while the external coalition is passive. Communication patterns within this system are typically top-down, and because insiders perceive the organization as belonging to the CEO, "their identification [is weak], so that material forms of inducement are required to secure their efforts" (p. 361). Hence, it appears that in the autocracy, compliance strategies will be more frequently used than any other process of influence.

Contrasted with the autocracy, in the missionary configuration power is distributed around the organization's mission or ideology. There may be subtle differences among members in terms of the power they have (leaders do emerge), and that difference may be mediated by references to the mission or ideology in communication. Further, leaders have power to the extent that they are seen

as embodying the organization's mission. In this configuration, members join or are selected by it "because of their natural propensity to identify with the ideology. . . . The members are firmly wedded to the organization's ideology; left alone, each will make decisions and take actions in accordance with its goals" (Mintzberg, 1983, p. 370).

Thus, it may be deduced that identification or internalization processes will predominate in the missionary, as contrasted with the predominance of compliance processes in the autocracy. Identification processes occur to the extent that the individual wants to establish a self-defining relationship with the organization, or some subgroup thereof. Internalization occurs to the extent that the individual accepts influence because of the satisfaction derived from the content of communication; content that references the organization's mission, and is congruent with the individual's value system. Two hypotheses may be posited:

1.) Compliance strategies are used with greater frequency in the autocracy than in the missionary.

2.) Internalization strategies are used with greater frequency in the missionary than in the autocracy.

By implication, then, a third hypothesis may be derived:

3.) Members of the missionary will be more committed to the organization than those in the autocracy.

Similar hypotheses may be tested with regard to the other power configurations in Mintzberg's typology.

Phase 4: Identification and internalization: Processes and products.

It should be noted that compliance, in Kelman's view, is a process by which commitment is induced; that is influence, and thus commitment, is achieved through compliance processes and its accompanying elements (as described earlier in this paper). Identification and internalization processes of social influence, however, can be seen as effecting commitment in one or a combination of ways: 1) a person may be induced to identify with the organization via various communication strategies (see Tompkins & Cheney 1985; Cheney, 1983a, 1983b; Simon, 1976), and 2) influencing agents may use already instilled identification to influence (Kelman, 1958).

The same might be said of internalization; we may study the processes by which people are made to internalize (however, in some organizations, such as the missionary this will hardly ever take place within the organization because 'society' usually does this and the individual joins the organization because its values are congruent with the individual's), or a person is persuaded because the organization tailors communications to fit the individual's value system (altruism, for example; appeals are made on the basis of reference to the organizational mission as embracing altruistic values). This is also how the organization maintains internalization of certain values, and inhibits the development of others--by not mentioning these others.

What may be studied then, are the types of communication that facilitate identification with the organization, or subgroups of the organization. By the same token, the communication that facilitates internalization of organizational values (as contrasted, in most cases, from goals) may also be studied. Such should be the aim of this fourth phase of organizational commitment research.

Phase 5: Developmental aspects of commitment

In this phase, we may look upon Kelman's processes of social influence as steps eventually leading to the highest level of commitment which occurs when organizational values are seen as being congruent with individual values. That is, we may examine commitment as it is developed during the tenure of a worker in a specific organization using the framework previously outlined.

Initially, it is hypothesized that in some organizations' members are induced to commit to the organization through compliance processes. After some time in the organization, however, the member may come to identify (want a self-defining relationship) with the organization. This happens because, in the words of Bem (1972), "doing is believing." That is, in the absence of a clear defined attitude toward the organization, the individual infers one on the basis of behavior exhibited while a member of the organization. As the individual spends more time within the "walls" of the organization, s/he may come to believe that there may be some other reason, beside material reward, why s/he has remained. In the search for alternatives, the individual comes to believe that s/he has remained with the organization because s/he wants it to succeed, and that it is

an integral part of who the individual is. Why else would the individual have remained so long and put so much effort into the organization? After some time, the individual may even come to believe that the organization's values are his or her own. The values have become internalized, and the individual is open to attempts at influence that are consistent with those values.

Thus, at least two hypotheses are available for test:

> 1.) The longer a person has been with an organization, the more committed he/she will be to the organization.
>
> 2.) The more time an individual has been with the organization, the greater the effectiveness, in terms of influence, of communication that references organizational values.

These hypotheses derive in part from Bem's self perception theory, namely that one infers attitudes on the basis of exhibited behavior. The more time an individual has been with an organization, the greater the strength of the attitude should be because behaviors have become more or less routinized or ingrained.

Commitment as Product.

Phase 6: Advantages and disadvantages of commitment.

This phase should consist of a series of investigations that examine commitment across different types of organizations. The primary goal should be to attempt to ascertain the conditions under which high or low levels of commitment are beneficial or detrimental to the organizations studied. Further, because Reichers (1985) has argued for the existence of multiple commitments, the impacts that individual commitment to the organization, or subgroup have on benefits or detriments for the organization need to be studied.

So, for example, if an individual has strong commitment to a subgroup of an organization (union, managers), what impact does such commitment have on the organization? Does the type of subgroup that a person has a strong commitment to make a difference? That is, are there some commitments that do not have an impact on the organization? What kinds of commitments are beneficial to the individual? Detrimental? Is the effect mediated by individual differences? By the

type of subgroup or organization? These are among the questions that ought to be answered during this phase of organizational commitment research.

Conclusion

Much has been written in the social scientific literature about the effects and antecedents of organizational commitment. The work compiled so far has lacked adequate integration and has failed to answer some key questions. As a result, we know a lot about commitment in certain respects and not in others, and we don't know what to make of the knowledge we do have.

What we do know, however, is that organizations and people's reactions toward them have changed since Whyte's time. It seems as though society has taken heed of his warning and taken advantage of his prescription for change. As Whyte himself so eloquently put it in The Organization Man:

> To say that we must recognize the dilemmas of the organization society is not to be inconsistent with the hopeful premise that the organization society can be as compatible for the individual as any previous society. We are not hopeless beings caught in the grip of forces we can do little about. Organization has been made for man, it can be changed by man (Whyte, 1956, p. 13).

This paper has outlined phases of research that will give us insight as to how it is that organizations have been changed by people and people have been changed by organizations since the writing of Whyte's treatise, and how those changes have resulted in greater compatibility between individual and organizational interests.

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Figure 1

Level of intrinsicness associated with Kelman's processes of social influence

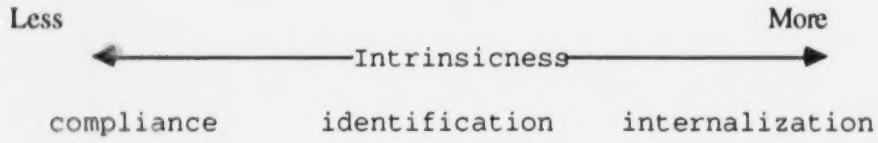

Figure 2

Processes through which the various components of commitment are acquired